

Schewel: Prioritize trails, parks in budgets

The Herald-Sun By Lauren Horsch May 28, 2016

DURHAM — In the upcoming fiscal year which begins July 1, the city is set to fund 12 new projects with a combined price tag of \$9.9 million.

The projects include new sidewalk construction, city-wide security upgrades, public art, bridge repair and some funding for recreation center upgrades and trails. The 12 projects also encompass new priorities identified by the city and the City Council — including the Duke Beltline Trail.

“In the time between when we last looked at the full scope of (capital improvement projects), which I believe was last fall, and when we had kickoff in December, some other priorities have come forward,” John Allore, assistant budget director, told the City Council this week as part of its two-days of budget meetings.

While there’s a recommendation on the table to fund only those 12 projects, the city prepares a long term list of capital projects. That long term look allows city departments and City Council members to see what is coming down the pipeline in future fiscal years.

City Councilman Steve Schewel expressed disappointment, that in general, trails are “that far down the line.” Funding to start acquiring the land for the Duke Beltline Trail is taking off, but other trails won’t receive funding until 2020.

“One of the things about these trails, it takes a while to do them,” Schewel said. “One of the reasons it takes a while is you have to acquire the right of way and that always seems to delay us.”

Schewel, who has been a staunch advocate for more trails and recreation opportunities in the city, has been thinking about how there could be a way to do the right-of-way acquisition as a one-time expenditure.

Steven Hicks, director of General Services, told Schewel the department is looking at finding a way to combining all of the trails — even though they’re individual projects — in order to get a better sense of the feasibility and constraints of certain trails.

“So you’re saying you’ll look at these right-of-way issues ... are you all doing it this year?” Schewel asked the director.

“No, as funding becomes available. And then as we work to determine how we can prioritize all the projects,” Hicks said.

Schewel understands the difficulties associated with getting new trails in the city, but he also knows that residents over the years have identified trails as a want.

“But I really hope we can figure out how to get the trails and the athletic facilities higher on our (priority) list,” Schewel said.

City Councilman Don Moffitt said it seems as though there are only three ways to move the trails up the list.

“One is to shift things to a lower priority later on, two would be raise taxes, the third would be to take it out of the (general) fund balance,” Moffitt said.

Schewel used the the meetings as an opportunity to advocate for more athletic fields, too.

“I don’t want to be too negative about this,” Schewel said. “But I do think in terms of fields and trails we are behind the eightball and I really hope that we will be thinking about a bond issue, a tax increase or moving some things around, that we’ll figure out a way (to get funding).”

Wake adopts transit plan, will seek voter approval of half-cent sales tax hike

County leaders adopt plan to bring commuter rail by 2027

They place half-cent sales tax referendum on November ballot

Plan would also bring more buses, new routes

THE NEWS AND OBSERVER BY PAUL A. SPECHT JUNE 6, 2016

RALEIGH -- Wake County residents will decide in November whether to increase the local sales tax by a half-cent to pay for what county leaders are calling a transformational transit plan that would connect the Triangle with more buses and trains.

The Wake County Board of Commissioners on Monday voted unanimously to adopt a \$2.3 billion plan to beef up bus service across the county and bring commuter trains to the area by 2027.

The plan, which commissioners called historic, was long awaited by transit advocates who see it as a way to reduce traffic congestion and connect the Triangle's focal points such as N.C. State University, Research Triangle Park, Duke University and UNC-Chapel Hill.

To pay for it, commissioners agreed to put a half-cent sales tax referendum on the Nov. 8 ballot. Wake residents now pay a 6.75-cent sales tax per dollar; the state collects 4.75 cents of that, and the county gets 2 cents.

If voters approve the tax increase, it would account for about \$1 billion of the project's cost in the first decade. A new vehicle registration fee and federal funds would cover the remaining \$1.3 billion.

If voters reject the tax, the transit plan could die on the shelf. On Monday, the Democrat-run Board of Commissioners exuded optimism.

County leaders for years have talked about improving local transit options but didn't pursue a defined plan until Democrats gained control of the board in 2014.

Republicans who previously controlled the board argued, among other things, that Wake doesn't have enough population density to warrant a large transit investment. Wake's population last year reached 1 million, and it is estimated to be growing by about 60 people a day.

The Democrats' election sweep about 18 months ago was a vote of confidence by taxpayers, said commissioner Jessica Holmes.

"The fact that four new commissioners were elected, running on a platform of providing transit and providing for our schools, I think that vote in and of itself in November of 2014 is indicative of Wake County's support for transit," Holmes said.

Voters in Durham and Orange counties have approved a half-cent sales tax increase to fund added transit in their corners of the Triangle. Plans in Durham and Orange call for light rail, while Wake is seeking slower commuter rail.

Still, supporters of Wake's plan on Monday said increased public transportation will reduce stress, increase productivity and improve the health of riders while protecting the environment by alleviating suburban sprawl.

The plan calls for new bus routes and more buses on existing routes, giving riders more frequent service. Planners say bus system improvements, coupled with commuter rail, could quadruple transit ridership in Wake County over the next decade.

The plan includes 20 miles of bus rapid transit service, known as BRT. Unlike traditional bus systems, BRT often provides faster service than other automobile traffic by running in dedicated lanes and getting special priority at traffic

signals. BRT would run every 15 minutes on 20 miles of Capital and Western boulevards, New Bern Avenue and South Wilmington Street.

Standard buses would travel another 63 miles of Raleigh streets at 15-minute intervals, in many cases quadrupling the current service levels.

Wake, as part of the plan, also aims to partner with Durham County to launch 37 miles of rush-hour commuter trains from eastern Wake through Raleigh, Cary, Morrisville, Research Triangle Park and someday into Durham. Riders could take a train to Morrisville and hop on a bus to Raleigh-Durham International Airport.

Transit advocates nearly filled the board chambers inside the Wake County Justice Center on Monday to applaud commissioners for the move. Among them were representatives from several corporate and nonprofit groups including Quintiles, Cisco, WakeUP Wake County, the Downtown Raleigh Alliance, the Sierra Club, the Southern Environmental Law Center and Advocates for Health in Action.

Two speakers, however, said the plan fails to do enough for the people who need transit the most.

"I would encourage you to go down to Southeast Raleigh ... and speak to individuals and ask them what they'll get out of this," said Joey Stansbury, a Raleigh resident who said he's also concerned about the county's debt.

Octavia Rainey, an activist from Southeast Raleigh, said the plan is geared to help young people more than poor black people who need affordable transportation.

"This plan is top up, not bottom up," she said. "Black people are always left behind."

Commissioners Chairman James West of Raleigh, who is black, said he hopes to address those concerns in the coming months.

"We've got a lot of time left to hopefully improve the plan," West said. "There are some gaps and disparities that we can work on."

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By the numbers: The massive NCDOT project connecting I-85 and I-40

Triangle Business Journal By Lauren K. Ohnesorge June 8, 2016

In less than four years, Interstates 85 and 40 will connect in Durham, the culmination of a decades-long transportation plan that officials say will be worth the traffic jams on 147.

[Phillip Townsend](#), resident engineer on the N.C. Department of Transportation project, says that right now, to get from I-85 in Granville County to Raleigh-Durham International Airport, it's a trek.

"You have to go through numerous stoplights, neighborhood roads," he says. "Whereas, when the project is complete, you'll be able to get from I-85 to I-40."

While the projected completion date of 2020 may seem far off for those travelers, it's been a long time coming, as the plan for a connector came out of the 1959 City of Durham Thoroughfare Plan. In 1982, when the Durham East-West Freeway (NC 147) was constructed, limited funding meant the East End Connector segment never happened.

In 2003, the East End Connector was added to a list of projects eligible for funding under the North Carolina Highway Trust Fund, and in 2005, officials began a re-evaluation study, with an environmental assessment finally signed in 2009.

But it wasn't until last year that crews actually broke down on the project.

Townsend says the project is 22 percent complete (the progress schedule anticipated it would be at about 24 percent by this time) and, despite complications, crews have moved a lot of dirt: 350,000 cubic yards.

"Staying environmentally compliant on a job this big ... we have to work really hard," he says.

The biggest challenge appears to be railroad coordination. A temporary railroad bridge has to be built to serve rail carriers while the original is torn down and rebuilt. And that means competing transportation companies Norfolk Southern and CSX Corp. are sharing one track on that temporary bridge. Previously, they had two separate tracks on a single bridge, which will be rebuilt into two separate bridges. Scheduling complications amount, and they're likely to last for several months.

And trains aren't the only traffic being inconvenienced.

Lane shifts are already causing traffic snarls and, as construction picks up over the next several months, those too could increase. Southbound lanes shifted into the median earlier this year as crews focused their efforts on that stretch of road. When they're finished, they'll do the same thing with the northbound lanes.

Dragados, USA broke ground in February 2015 and is expected to complete the project in January 2020, which will carry the new I-885 designation.

Numerous agencies have been involved, from Stantec (pavement marking) to SEPI (signal and communications plans) to Mulkey Engineering and Consultants (structure plans) and beyond. Altogether, more than a dozen outside agencies contributed to the project's design. And concrete pavement work begins this summer.

The project, expected to cost \$142 million, involves 2.75 miles of US 70, two miles of NC 147, 1.25 miles of the new East End Connector, 16 bridges, four culverts and four rehabilitation bridges.

And those are just some of the numbers associated with the project, according to a recent NCDOT presentation:

By the numbers:

- 2,883: The length of constructed water line thus far, measured in linear feet
- 7,135: The length of sewer line constructed thus far, measured in linear feet
- 3: The number of culverts completed
- 91: The number of drainage structures that have been built
- 1,400: The amount (in terms of linear feet) of drilled shafts completed
- 375,000: The tons of asphalt needed for the project
- 8: The number of miles of storm drain required

Lauren Ohnesorge covers information technology and entrepreneurship.

NCDOT: Repairs to Lystra Road in Chatham will be done soon

Recent rains have delayed repair work on Lystra Road in northern Chatham County, but the state Department of Transportation says the end of the project is in sight.



THE NEWS AND OBSERVER-TRAFFIC BY RICHARD STRADLING JUNE 13, 2016

CHAPEL HILL -- Recent rains have delayed repair work on Lystra Road in northern Chatham County, but the state Department of Transportation says the end of the project is in sight.

The giant sinkhole that forced the road to close last winter should be repaired by the end of June, DOT says.

Lystra has been closed between Farrington Point and Jack Bennett roads since Jan. 18, when the pavement collapsed after two 5-foot culverts connecting two sections of Jordan Lake gave way.

The \$2.2 million repair project entails replacing the culverts with an aluminum pipe 12 feet in diameter, relocating an underground county water line and repairing the road.

Lystra was expected to reopen this Friday. Now the contractor expects it will happen by June 30, though it could be sooner

NCDOT inks \$4M partnership to implement real-time traffic tracker

TRIANGLE BUSINESS JOURNAL BY LAUREN K. OHNESORGE JUNE 21, 2016

Avoiding traffic jams along your commute could get easier, thanks to a new \$4 million contract between the N.C. Department of Transportation and a German technology company.

The partnership is with Berlin-based location cloud company HERE. According to a statement released by the company, NCDOT will have access to real-time traffic data for state roadways, “enabling up-to-the-minute information about current road conditions and travel times on dynamic highway signs.”

Monali Shah, director of global intelligent transportation at HERE, says the data will help the state have better insight into what’s happening on roads across the state.

“We are processing GPS probe data,” she says. “This is data that comes from mobile devices, connected vehicles, fleets, all kinds of different data sets that we are processing.”

And that data becomes real-time traffic condition information – updated every minute, she says.

While NCDOT will be making that information available to the public, via its website and other traffic alert tools, such as digital billboards, the partnership has a long-term benefit for the department. Already, traffic engineers are using the data in operations centers across the state. The information they’re getting can help them plan future projects, as well as allocate what the priorities are – the trouble spots in North Carolina’s road system. And, once traffic construction projects are complete, the data can show whether they’re improving commutes across the state.

Historically, some of this data collection has been done with sensors and traffic cameras. But here, the data set is larger – from GPS data transmitted through your smartphone to smart vehicles. And that means the data isn’t confined to a major highway.

“It’s available across all roads in the state,” she says. Integration began in April and is virtually complete, she says.

The five-year contract with HERE costs NCDOT about \$4.1 million, according to NCDOT spokesman Steve Abbott.

According to HERE, the deal makes North Carolina the eighth state to utilize its real-time traffic services as part of an agreement with the I-95 Corridor Coalition’s Vehicle Probe Project.

HERE is based in Berlin and has locations in Chicago, Seattle and the San Francisco Bay Area.

Lauren Ohnesorge covers information technology and entrepreneurship

From 9 to 4: RDU narrows future growth concepts for 2040

Triangle Business Journal By Lauren K. Ohnesorge, Staff Writer Jun 29, 2016

Raleigh-Durham International Airport has [narrowed nine future growth concepts](#) to four – and nixed the idea of adding a completely new terminal in the process.

The four plans presented publicly for the first time Tuesday (in front of a crowd of about 150) do include some bullish elements – all intended to help the airport accommodate the growth it’s anticipating. And all include runway replacements, additions and revisions.

RDU spokesman [Andrew Sawyer](#) says the runway situation is complicated. The airport’s 10,000-foot commercial runway is essential to its operation as it serves both of RDU’s trans-Atlantic flights. And that means, if it’s replaced or extended, the 7,500-foot runway would need to be extended first to accommodate international flights in the interim.

One option discussed is building a runway parallel to the 10,000-foot strip. The current runway could be used until it's complete, then revamped into a taxiway.

All plans call for the addition of a runway on the west side – one that means new flight patterns. But Sawyer says that wouldn't be an immediate change.

"We have seen from the data that the runway will not need to be operational in the next 25 years," he says, adding that its inclusion on the plans is more of a placeholder, though reserves a spot for RDU's future.

None of the plans are intended to be built out at once, he says. Take an aerial transportation system proposed as part of "Alternative C." Even if it's approved, it's likely that RDU would start out using a bus system, "building in the automated people mover over time."

The goal right now, he says, is to whittle the four concepts into a preferred alternative, one that will make its public debut at another meeting, to be held Sept. 7.

But the plans aren't the only revamps being discussed. The airport is also mulling over what to do with parcels of land it owns – parcels currently used for a park and nature trails.

The property was acquired under an agreement that it be used for a direct aviation purpose. And part of the land will likely be used to support the airport financially. Sawyer says it's likely that the land will be leased for development – but not for 15 to 20 years "unless something falls at our doorstep."

While everything from the roadway to the water at Lake Crabtree is in a flood plane and approved for a park, from the entrance to I-40 is under a short-term lease with Wake County.

Sawyer says it's that tract that could be developed to fund additions and revisions for the airport. While he admits many present Tuesday night weren't happy about that possibility, he says the airport hopes to work with the local community to incorporate the land's natural features with whatever development is proposed for the site.

Traffic deaths up sharply in 2015; speed-limit increase, economy cited

Number increases 7.7 percent from 2014

With cheaper gas prices, more people were driving

94 percent of crashes tied to human error, NHTSA administrator says

The Washington Post By Ashley Halsey III, Michael Laris July 6, 2016

In an age when cars are getting safer, traffic fatalities were up sharply in 2015, adding a disturbing data point in the nation's long-term trend toward less-deadly roads.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration said Friday that an estimated 35,200 people were killed on the road last year, up 7.7 percent from 32,675 in 2014.

An early analysis of the data showed spikes in deaths of bicyclists, pedestrians and motorcyclists, which were up 13, 10 and 9 percent, respectively. Crashes involving young drivers were up 10 percent, those involving rollovers in passenger cars were up 5 percent and those involving large trucks were up 4 percent, according to the NHTSA estimates.

Federal officials pointed to economic factors as a contributor. (CONTINUED...)

"As the economy has improved and gas prices have fallen, more Americans are driving more miles," NHTSA Administrator Mark Rosekind said in a statement. But he added that "94 percent of crashes can be tied back to a human choice or error," so changing behaviors and promoting crash-prevention technology are crucial.

Another factor helping to push the death numbers higher is an increase in speed limits in recent years, according to a recent report by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.

The institute said that in 2013 alone, higher speed limits resulted in 1,900 additional deaths, canceling out the lives saved by air bags that year.

Responding to questions Thursday at the National Press Club, Christopher Hart, chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board, had a one-word answer when asked how to deal with the increase in traffic fatalities.

"Automation," Hart said. "For 20 years, we've been pushing for something that is a collision-avoidance system. That's step No. 1, an avoidance system that stops cars from hitting one another."

Jonathan Adkins, executive director of the Governors Highway Safety Association, agreed with Hart's assessment. But he added a cautionary note, pointing to Tesla's announcement Thursday that one of its drivers was killed while driving a Tesla vehicle on "autopilot."

"As the tragic Tesla death reminds us, focus on the driver can't be forgotten in the looming age of autonomous vehicles. Technology will help keep us safer on the road, but we are a long way from the day of truly self-driving vehicles," he said.

While troubled by the rise in deaths, Adkins said there are proven tools to address the issue.

"They include strong laws coupled with highly visible law enforcement and robust public-education campaigns. By using these tactics, the nation saw a nearly 25 percent drop in the number of fatalities between 2005 and 2014, including a record low in 2011," he said.

It was unclear what role, if any, seat-belt use and drunken driving had in the increase.

The big jump in 2015 deaths came in four states grouped by NHTSA – Montana, Idaho, Oregon and Washington – where fatalities increased by 20 percent. The next-largest increase – 10 percent – was in six New England states. After that, one of the biggest regional increases – 9 percent – came in a grouping of mid-Atlantic states to which NHTSA appended Kentucky.

The only decrease – 1 percent – in fatalities came in a group comprising Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Mississippi and Louisiana.

There was no immediate explanation for the regional disparities.

One state that has released its 2015 data, Michigan, may be representative of the overall trend. Michigan State Police said traffic deaths were up 10 percent last year, but deaths involving teenagers, alcohol and motorcyclists were all up by more than 20 percent. Bicyclist fatalities were up 57 percent.

Adkins said he would await a more definitive breakdown of nationwide accident causes but suggested that a combination of factors may be in play.

"Typically, during periods of economic growth and low unemployment, we see the number of optional trips by motorists increasing," he said. "Younger people may be employed now when they weren't a few years ago, and they have a few bucks in their pocket so they can stop for a few beers on the way home from work or on the weekend."

Truck smashes into bridge despite new lights

The Herald-Sun By Keith Upchurch July 6, 2016



The Herald-Sun | Bob Ashley A truck sits on the road after hitting the bridge at Gregson and Pettigrew Streets on Wednesday in Durham.

DURHAM -- A moving truck hit a downtown bridge Wednesday and got stuck despite thousands of dollars the state spent this spring to prevent such accidents.

The crash was reported to police at 12:10 p.m. after a truck bearing the name Excel Moving & Storage Inc. smashed into the bridge at Gregson and Peabody streets, police said.

No one was hurt, Durham police spokeswoman Kammie Michael said.

The truck was damaged extensively.

The driver could not be reached for comment. His passenger told a reporter he was talking with his supervisor, and did not return a phone call.

An officer at the scene said police think the light has cut down on accidents, but figures were not immediately available.

The N.C. Department of Transportation spent about \$280,000 this spring to install laser-guided traffic lights at the bridge and another bridge at Roxboro and Pettigrew streets. The lights tell drivers to turn if their vehicle is too tall.

The bridge at Peabody and Gregson, often called "the can opener," is 11 feet, 8 inches high.

Reporter Lauren Horsch contributed to this story.

How a \$1.4B DOT plan in Virginia could boost high-speed rail in N.C.

Triangle Business Journal By Lauren K. Ohnesorge Jul 7, 2016, 7:00am EDT

Transportation officials say a project that was recently announced will completely transform travel along the East Coast.

Dubbed the Atlantic Gateway project, the mammoth \$1.4 billion buildout, [detailed Tuesday by Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe](#), is aimed at improving more than 50 miles of the Interstate 95 corridor, from Fredericksburg to the Pentagon. And it's a bullish plan that includes extended interstate express lanes, as well as what has North Carolina officials the most excited – expanded passenger and freight rail capacity.

The project means 14 miles of new rail track along the CSX rail corridor, including approaches for a new bridge over the Potomac River. The project even allows for ownership of the S-line, an abandoned rail corridor that runs from North Carolina to the Richmond area – a track that happens to be necessary for a high-speed rail plan both Virginia and North Carolina have been planning for years.

[Joe Milazzo](#), director of the Regional Transportation Alliance, called it “an extraordinarily important project for the southern mid-Atlantic regions of Virginia – and North Carolina as well.”

The ability to purchase the Virginia portion of the Raleigh to Richmond high-speed rail corridor is “the biggest development in high-speed rail that points north that I’ve seen,” he said Wednesday in an interview.

The current plan would cut 30 miles off the trip to Richmond from Raleigh, he pointed out. Currently, to get to Richmond, you have to travel to Selma.

Paul Worley, N.C. Department of Transportation Rail Division Director, said the project will be a boost to anyone trying to get from North Carolina to D.C. by rail.

“And any capacity you build on that railroad also helps freight,” he said. It’s about capacity, he added. And increasing rail capacity to the north will boost future projects in the Southeast Corridor, which includes lines from Atlanta to Charlotte to Raleigh.

“Any time when you can make some real changes and build additional capacity, that’s good for the East Coast,” he said in an interview. North Carolina and Virginia coordinated when applying for federal funds, he said. And that meant he was part of early discussions about the project.

North Carolina is about to embark on \$380 million worth of track improvements between Raleigh and Charlotte, he said.

And it all helps bolster the region’s rail connectivity.

According to the project’s federal grant presentation, the Raleigh to Richmond track segment will provide the required connectivity of North Carolina’s service to Amtrak’s Northeast Corridor, part of North Carolina and Virginia’s Southeast High Speed Rail Corridor.

In addition to the \$165 million federal FASTLANE grant, \$565 million in private investments and \$710 million in other transportation funds will go toward the project.

Lauren Ohnesorge covers information technology and entrepreneurship.

After nearly six months, Lystra Road reopens in Chatham County

The News and Observer-Traffic By Richard Stradling July 15, 2016

CHAPEL HILL--Lystra Road in northern Chatham County reopened to traffic on Friday evening, nearly six months after a large sinkhole forced the road to close last winter.

The road had been expected to reopen June 17, but heavy rain twice prompted the state Department of Transportation to push back the completion date.

Lystra had been closed between Farrington Point and Jack Bennett roads since Jan. 18, when the pavement collapsed after two 5-foot culverts connecting two sections of Jordan Lake gave way.

The \$2.2 million repair project entailed replacing the culverts with an aluminum pipe 12 feet in diameter, relocating an underground county water line and repairing the road. State officials say the project was complicated by the depth of the pipe and the narrowness of the causeway, with Jordan Lake on both sides of the road.

Bridge linking Riverwalk to speedway trail opens

The Herald-Sun Town of Hillsborough July 26, 2016



New footbridge linking Hillsborough's Riverwalk with historic speedway trail.

HILLSBOROUGH -- A new footbridge connecting the town's Riverwalk greenway to the Historic Oconeechee Speedway Trail opened with a ribbon-cutting ceremony Friday afternoon.

About 100 people attended the opening, and Mayor Tom Stevens, Ayr Mount Site Supervisor Bill Crowther and Peter Kenny, co-president of Classical American Homes Preservation Trust and the Richard Hampton Jenrette Foundation, delivered opening remarks. (CONTINUED...)

Dick Jenrette bought the Ayr Mount plantation house in 1984 and formed the preservation trust in 1993. "A historic house is one thing, but Dick has had the wisdom of always thinking about the landscape and the trails — and just making it a community," Kenny said.

The trust and foundation installed the 6-foot-wide pedestrian bridge, which spans 95 feet over the Eno River east of the Town of Hillsborough's Riverwalk. The organization owns the Ayr Mount Historic Site as well as the Historic Occoneechee Speedway Trail and Johnston Nature Preserve.

Crowther touched on the site's history in his remarks. "I think the quiet is the attribute, and the Native American history is what provides the spirituality for this place," he said. "If Native Americans chose this place to live, that tells you it's a very special place."

The bridge and trail pass over and protect Native American village sites along the Eno River. The area has served as a laboratory and classroom for many University of North Carolina students since the 1950s, when the UNC Archaeological Field School began conducting research in the area.

"What incredible partnerships — certainly between the town and Classical American Homes Preservation Trust — but also how the trust has partnered with the community," Stevens said. "So many people contributed to this connection in big ways and small ways. What makes this special is not just the place and the trail but also the people, and they use this to create a sense of community."

The \$260,000 bridge and connecting trail are part of Ayr Mount's Master Trail Plan and were built with a \$100,000 N.C. Recreational Trails Program grant and community donations.

Classical American Homes Preservation Trust has been collaborating with the town for about five years on this project and another bridge that will be installed later to connect the speedway trail to Ayr Mount. Summit Design and Engineering Services oversaw the new bridge's construction work, which was done by McQueen Construction Inc. Both companies worked with the town on Riverwalk.

The trust also is collaborating with the Eno River Association, Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail, the Historic Speedway Group and Davey Tree Service. In addition to a number of individual donations, the trust has received major donations from:

- Crescent Communities, developer of the Forest Ridge neighborhood — \$25,000.
- Vietri — \$10,000.
- Drees Homes, developer of the Corbin Creek Woods neighborhood — \$5,000.
- In memory of Kim Walsh.

Donations are still being accepted and may be sent via the Classical American Homes Preservation Trust website. Funds collected in excess of the cost of the bridge and trail will be put toward the planned bridge connecting the speedway trail to Ayr Mount.

RDU parking totals jump as airport looks to revamp parking

Triangle Business Journal By Lauren K. Ohnesorge Jul 26, 2016

Statistics show traffic at Raleigh-Durham International Airport's parking lots is increasing.

That's according to new numbers released by the airport Tuesday that show the number of cars exiting its lots grew from just over 172,000 in May to nearly 180,000 in June. (CONTINUED...)

That compares to just over 172,000 in June of 2015 and nearly 166,000 vehicles exiting lots in June of 2014.

And the increased traffic is coming as RDU revamps its parking system.

The airport recently reorganized its parking lots, issuing new names. ParkRDU, for example, is the name for an area that spans much of the main parking garage located between Terminals 1 and 2.

ParkRDU Premier is a covered area on the ground level of the main garage with direct access to the terminals and ParkRDU Economy (formerly Park & Ride)

is a short shuttle ride away.

But the biggest change, an on-line parking reservation system, continues to meet with technical glitches. Almost three months after officials expected the program to go online, the system has yet to debut.

“Our providers have been working daily to get the issues corrected,” RDU spokesman [Andrew Sawyer](#) said Tuesday.

The online reservation system has been a three-year process and a \$4.5 million investment by the airport already, a sum that encompasses everything from consulting fees to backend software programming.

- [New parking reservation system to debut at RDU](#)

RDU has been working with Dublin Airport Authority on the system, which officials are anticipating will be the first such reservation program in the nation.

By booking online, customers will be able to get a lower rate – and guaranteed parking, officials say. They’ll enter and exit the gates with a QR code – and that’s the source of the current glitch, according to Sawyer.

Parking totals at Raleigh-Durham International Airport

- June: 179,838
- May: 172,412
- April: 153,907
- March: 158,655
- February: 137,357
- January: 145,398
- December, 2015: 172,783
- November, 2015: 163,208
- October, 2015: 174,365
- September, 2015: 159,014
- August, 2015: 173,765
- July, 2015: 181,693
- June, 2015: 176,313

Lauren Ohnesorge covers information technology and entrepreneurship

Massive Raleigh-to-Charlotte train project looks to slash travel times

Triangle Business Journal By Lauren K. Ohnesorge Jul 26, 2016

A [massive rail project from Raleigh to Charlotte is nearing its completion date](#)— which means North Carolina Department of Transportation is ready to show off its bullish plan to get you off the interstate and onto a train.

The sun had barely risen over the Raleigh skyline Tuesday when state executives, including Commerce Secretary [John Skvarla](#), boarded the Charlotte-bound train.

“It’s been an Amtrak station since the 1980s,” says [Jason Orthner](#), manager of design and construction at NCDOT’s rail division, pointing to the dirt moving to the left that will soon be Union Station. The station is just part of a massive undertaking already bringing track additions and realignments across the state.

Monday, there are still swaths of rail where there is only one line – meaning if a freight train is stalled, commuters have no alternative but to feel the delays. Just Monday, a stall near Elon made the Amtrak two hours late for its stop in Burlington, according to the station manager.

But adding what could equate to a passing lane in places when mean increased reliability, says NCDOT rail division director [Paul Worley](#). And that, along with amenities rail is already offering in North Carolina, from Wi-Fi to wide windows, makes it a real option for business travelers, he says.

Throw in new bridges (such as a bridge over Morrisville Parkway), track realignments (the railroad’s original builders avoided rocky hills with their pick axes – hills NCDOT can blast away in order to straighten the track), and speed increases (by pushing through one hill near the Haw River), speed can increase from 55 to 80 miles per hour, says Orthner. And officials are shooting for speed.

When the undertaking – dubbed the Piedmont Improvement Program – is complete in 2017, there could be five commuter trains a day running from Raleigh to Charlotte. And freight, too, can add service lines.

“I don’t think people realize the magnitude of what’s happened,” says Skvarla. As freight improvements hit, so too will an already planned port expansion. And [a new CSX intermodal terminal in Rocky Mount](#) means businesses could better utilize both the port and the rail lines for cargo loads, equating to a perfect storm for economic development, he says.

“We need to continue to put the pieces together to make it happen,” he says.

But another passenger on Tuesday’s train, Transportation Secretary Nick Tennyson, says it’s not just about construction improvements when you’re trying to get travelers on a commuter train.

“There is an expectation that once you are on the train, that is all you do,” he says.

There remains a last-mile problem, getting from that station to your actual destination.

Worley says it’s a top-of-mind issue, and conversations are underway with transit firms across the state. They’re working to develop what he calls a “transfer pass,” where passengers could travel on trains and buses on the same trip ticket. And Worley says he’d like to see partnerships extend to taxis and ride-share services such as Uber.

The Piedmont Improvement Project is funded with federal stimulus money. The Federal Railroad Administration awarded the state a \$546.5 million grant from that program in 2010, with a cooperative agreement specifying that \$520 million of the sum goes directly to the Piedmont Improvement Project.

New NC bike law allows passing in no-passing zones, stiffens penalties for aggressive motorists

The News and Observer By Anne Blythe Jul 26, 2016

RALEIGH -- Many cyclists in North Carolina know all too well the chilly breeze that passes over them on narrow rural roads, when an impatient motorist whizzes by with few kind words for their mode of transportation.

If the center line is solid white or double yellow, drivers often are passing illegally.

But on Oct. 1, state law will change so drivers can pass slower-moving bicycles or mopeds in no-passing zones if the motorist gives a berth of at least 4 feet and if the cyclist is not making a left turn.

But aggressive motorists whose actions cause a cyclist to change travel lanes, leave the road or crash will suffer stiffer penalties, pay higher fines and possibly lose their driver's license for several months, under the amended law.

Another change requires cyclists riding at night, effective Dec. 1, to add a light on the back of the bike to the one already required on the front – or wear a reflective vest or clothing that is visible from at least 300 feet to the rear. Hand signals have been clarified for cyclists who got used to throwing a right arm out to the side to indicate they were turning in that direction. Cyclists can legally use their right arm now or use their left arm for hand signals, pointing the hand straight up to indicate a right turn.

The [new rules](#) are part of a monthslong process that brought together cyclists, law enforcement officers, farmers, truckers and others who worked with the state Department of Transportation to study bike safety laws and develop recommendations for better ensuring the safety of cyclists and motorists along the roadway.

Among the issues studied:

- How faster-moving vehicles could pass bicycles on roadways where it might be difficult to see around curves.
- Whether cyclists should be required to ride single file or allowed to ride two or more abreast.;
- Whether cyclists had to carry an ID.
- Aggressive driving, harassment and distracted driving laws.
- Whether groups of riders needed a permit to travel together in large numbers.

Lisa Riegel, executive director of [BikeWalk NC](#), is pleased with the changes to the law adopted this summer, but she has urged cyclists to remain alert to the potential for additional changes in the next legislative session that trouble some who use bicycles for commuting and recreation.

"When they first proposed the bill, we were concerned that they were trying to limit bicyclists," Riegel said, recounting proposals that could have required groups to get permits to ride, as well as some talk about making cyclists get licenses to ride.

An average of 19 cyclists die and more than 600 are hurt on North Carolina streets and highways each year. Many crashes involve impatient drivers who are determined to avoid crossing the center line on the left – while they misjudge the space separating car from bicycle on the right.

Motorists and rural residents counter that cyclists riding in packs of 50 to 100 or in small groups two- to three-abreast on narrow roads can create traffic snarls and cause maddening delays. No-passing zones can stretch for miles on some winding roads, and cyclists acknowledge that road restrictions put in place for cars attempting to pass cars can be detrimental to four-wheelers and two-wheelers. (CONTINUED...)

"The safe way to pass a bicyclist on those roads is to slow down, wait until no traffic is coming for a sufficient clear distance ahead, and move into the next lane to pass," Steven Goodridge, a board member of BikeWalk NC and certified instructor, said recently. "Most motorists do exactly that Oftentimes the center line is solid, but because the bicyclist is traveling so slowly, it's still sufficiently safe to pass if the clear sight distance is good."

In the minds of some who regularly travel North Carolina's many rural roads, there has been a war of the wheels going on for years.

In rural Orange County, Andrew Prokopetz pursued criminal charges two years ago against a pickup truck driver who he says intentionally slammed on his brakes in front of a pack of riders.

Prokopetz was sent tumbling to the pavement and was so scraped up and bruised that his shirt was shredded, his wedding ring was scratched, his finger was jammed and his ire provoked.

After several dates in criminal court and the prospect of a civil case, the man charged with using his truck as a weapon settled with the rider and issued an apology that left Prokopetz less than satisfied.

Many cyclists now equip their bikes with video cameras to catch aggressive drivers on tape.

Prokopetz does. "I still get buzzed regularly," he said this week.

Riegel led a meeting in Carrboro on Monday night to explain the new parts of the law in a community where many bike to work and take to the rural roads in the mornings and evenings for recreational riding. Before state legislators return to work next year, Riegel hopes to develop a campaign to educate North Carolinians about how beneficial it can be for towns, cities and counties to develop transportation strategies that include bicycling as a mode being used more and more.

"We really need to work with the legislative leadership on that," Riegel said.

Large sinkhole closes road in Durham

WRAL.com By Mikaya Thurmond August 1, 2016



Durham, N.C. — A road in Durham remains closed Monday morning while authorities work to repair a weather-related sinkhole that emerged late Sunday.

Authorities shut down a portion of Glenn Road between Club Boulevard and Bundy Avenue around 10 p.m. to steer traffic away from the large sinkhole, which stretches from one side of the road to the other and is estimated to be 15 to 20 feet deep.

Officials say the sinkhole was caused by too much rushing water in the creek beneath Glenn Road.

Several vehicles were affected by the sinkhole and one driver had to be rescued from his car when he drove into the hole, but no one was seriously hurt, officials say.

Other accidents occurred at the site when drivers slammed on their breaks to avoid flood water and the hole.

Officials are working to repair the road Monday and are asking drivers to avoid the area.

It is unclear when the road will reopen.